A health literacy profile of clients accessing community mental health services

Barwon Health

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BACKGROUND

Health literacy encompasses a broad range of abilities and resources required to access and engage with health services and information[1]. Previous work has been undertaken to understand and address the needs of population groups managing chronic health conditions[2], however, there is currently a paucity of data regarding health literacy among clients accessing mental health services.

OBJECTIVE

The current study aimed to describe the health literacy profiles of Barwon Health Community Mental Health Services (CMHS) clients.
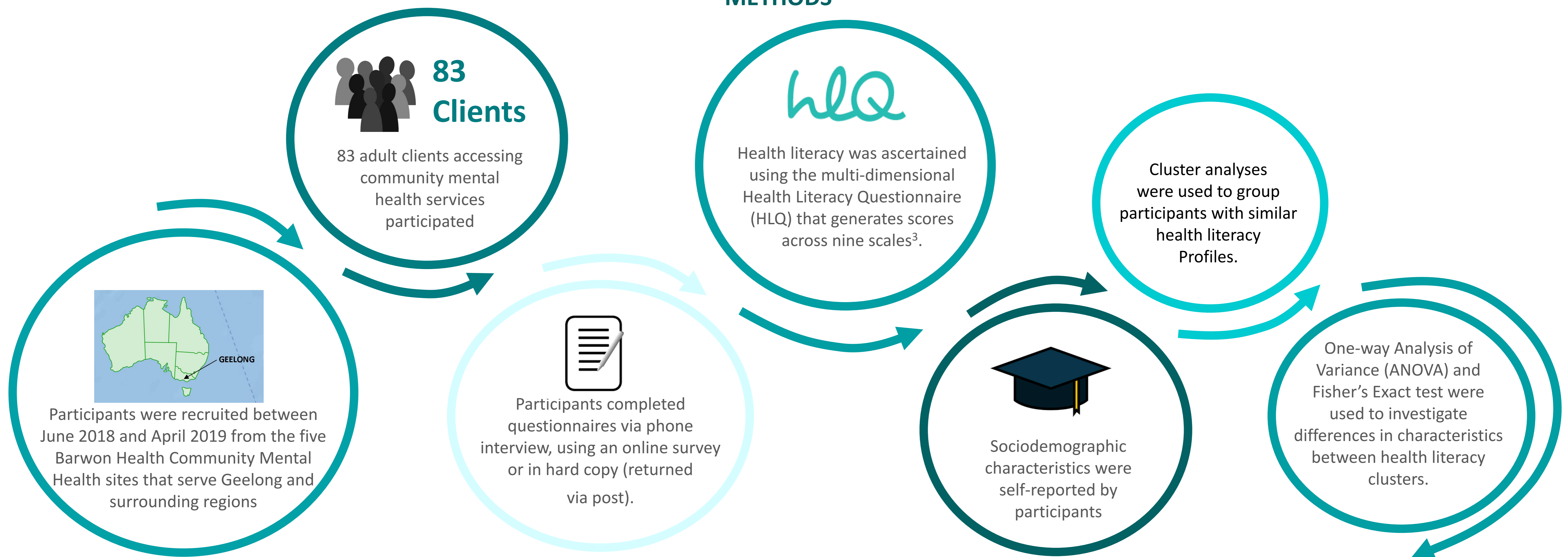
METHODS

Figure 1: Description of the study methods, including; population, data collection and analyses.

RESULTS

Of the participants (n=83), 51.8% were female and the median age was 42yr (range 27.2-64.1yr). The cluster analysis identified four distinct health literacy profiles (Table 1).

Profile A (n=20) demonstrated particular strengths in scales related to feeling supported by and engaging with healthcare providers and actively managing health. Profile B (n=42) demonstrated similar healthcare provider related strengths and good social support but reported greater difficulty finding health information and actively managing health. Profile C (n=8) were unique in reporting low scores for scales related to feeling supported by healthcare providers but demonstrated comparatively higher scores for understanding health information and actively managing health. Finally, Profile C (n=13) faced difficulties finding and understanding health information but felt understood and supported by healthcare providers and had adequate social support for health.

No differences in age, sex, education level or number of chronic conditions were identified between health literacy profiles (data not shown)

Table 1: Sociodemographic characteristics and mean HLQ scale scores across health literacy clusters

| | Client characteristics for each cluster median (IQR) or n (%) | | | | | | Mean (SD) | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | Range 1-4 | | | | | Range 1-5 | | | |
Profiles	Participants n(%) of total	Age (yr)	Female	High School Complete	Lives Alone	Health Care Card	Scale 1. Feeling understood and supported by healthcare providers	Scale 2. Having sufficient information to manage my health	Scale 3. Actively managing my health	Scale 4. Social support for health	Scale 5. Appraisal of health information	Scale 6. Ability to actively engage with healthcare providers	Scale 7. Navigating the healthcare system	Scale 8. Ability to find good health information	Scale 9. Understand health information well enough to know what to do
A	20 (24.1)	46.4 (36.6-52.5)	9 (45.0)	14 (70.0)	11 (55.0)	19 (95.0)	3.78 (0.26)	3.48 (0.41)	3.68 (0.31)	3.39 (0.47)	3.20 (0.56)	4.43 (0.49)	4.29 (0.40)	4.14 (0.61)	4.26 (0.59)
B	42 (50.6)	43.7 (35.3-52.4)	26 (61.9)	25 (59.5)	18 (42.9)	34 (81.0)	3.29 (0.36)	2.83 (0.33)	2.90 (0.41)	2.91 (0.43)	2.53 (0.42)	3.95 (0.43)	3.86 (0.37)	3.80 (0.42)	4.01 (0.46)
C	8 (9.6)	35.5 (29.4-41.3)	3 (37.5)	5 (62.5)	3 (37.5)	7 (87.5)	2.22 (0.31)	1.97 (0.31)	2.68 (0.37)	1.70 (0.48)	2.35 (0.62)	2.75 (0.55)	2.85 (0.36)	3.43 (0.51)	3.83 (0.49)
D	13 (15.7)	37.8 (34.7-41.7)	5 (38.5)	5 (38.5)	5 (38.5)	13 (100.0)	3.08 (0.47)	2.60 (0.55)	2.58 (0.43)	2.75 (0.61)	2.49 (0.33)	3.03 (0.86)	2.63 (0.61)	2.40 (0.55)	2.40 (0.57)
Total	83 (100.0)	42.0 (34.7-51.5)	43 (51.8)	49 (59.0)	37 (44.6)	73 (88.0)	3.27 (0.54)	2.87 (0.57)	3.02 (0.55)	2.89 (0.65)	2.67 (0.55)	3.80 (0.77)	3.67 (0.72)	3.62 (0.75)	3.80 (0.80)

HLQ – Health Literacy Questionnaire, IQR – Interquartile Range, SD – Standard Deviation.

CONCLUSION

A number of distinct health literacy profiles exist among CMHS clients. Future health literacy interventions may utilise this information to tailor the delivery of information and services to meet the diverse health literacy needs of Community Mental Health Services clients.

FUNDING SOURCES

IMPACT
CENTRE FOR INNOVATION IN MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH AND CLINICAL TREATMENT

DEAKIN UNIVERSITY

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